

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 EB-08 SCA-01 VO-03 DHA-05 AGRE-00 COME-00  
TRSE-00 OMB-01 SIL-01 LAB-04 CU-04 /086 W  
-----078073 262130Z /65/40  
R 241615Z AUG 77  
FM AMEMBASSY ROME  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6689

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (MRN SHUD READ 13744 VICE 17344)

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: CGEN, PINT, IT  
SUBJ: CONSULAR VISIT TO ABRUZZO REGION

1. SUMMARY - DURING LAST WEEK OF JULY, AN EMBOFF IN CONTINUING SERIES OF CALLS ON REGIONAL, PROVINCIAL AND MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS WITHIN ROME'S CONSULAR DISTRICT VISITED THE FOUR PROVINCIAL CAPTIALS (L'AQUILA, TERAMO, PESCARA AND CHIETI) OF THE ABRUZZO REGION. THE REGION IS CHARACTERIZED BY ITS LOCATION IN THE MIDDLE OF THE APPENINES, THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN RANGE OUTSIDE OF NORTHERN ITALY. THE MOUNTAINEOUS NATURE OF THE AREA ECONOMICALLY AFFECTS THE ENTIRE REGION, BUT L'AQUILA PROVINCE IN PARTICULAR AS THE OTHER THREE PROVINCES DESCEND TO THE ADRIATIC COAST. THE POPULATION OF ABRUZZO IS JUST OVER 1.2 MILLION, 11 PERCENT OF WHICH LIVE IN THE CITY OF PESCARA. AS IN MOST OTHER PARTS OF THE ROME CONSULAR DISTRICT, LAW AND ORDER IS NOT A PROBLEM, PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF LARGE POPULATION CENTERS. BASICALLY CONSERVATIVE, ABRUZZO HAS YET TO SEE A PCI POLITICIAN ELECTED AS PRESIDENT OF ITS REGIONAL OR PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATIONS, OR AS MAYOR OF ONE OF THE PROVINCIAL CAPITALS, ALTHOUGH THE PCI IS A COALITION

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PARTNER IN THE PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATIONS OF PESCARA AND TERAMO. - END SUMMARY.

2. ECONOMICALLY, THE ABRUZZO REGION PRESENTS A MIXED PICTURE. HISTORICALLY, THE AREA HAS BEEN ONE OF HEAVY EMIGRATION FIRST OVERSEAS TO THE US, CANADA AND AUSTRALIA FOLLOWED BY LARGE MOVEMENTS TOWARDS THE

INDUSTRIAL CITIES OF NORTHERN ITALY AS WELL AS TO THE MORE INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES OF EUROPE SUCH AS GERMANY AND SWITZERLAND. THIS EMIGRATION, WHILE GREATLY REDUCED AND IN SOME AREAS REVERSED DUE TO ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN THE REST OF EUROPE, STILL CONTINUES TODAY AS WITNESSED BY THE LARGE NUMBERS OF VEHICLES WITH GERMAN AND SWISS LICENSE PLATES SEEN BY THE REPORTING OFFICER. THE MOUNTAINOUS NATURE OF THE AREA WITH RESULTING NUMEROUS ISOLATED VILLAGES, LIMITED SCOPE FOR AGRICULTURE AND UNTIL RECENTLY A POOR ROAD NETWORK HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE PHENOMENON OF EMIGRATION, WHICH STILL AFFECTS L'AQUILA PROVINCES IN PARTICULAR (IT APPARENTLY HAS LOST 10 PERCENT OF ITS POPULATION SINCE THE LAST CENSUS IN 1971). ASIDE FROM SOME MEDIUM AND LIGHT INDUSTRY, ESPECIALLY HANDICRAFTS SUCH AS CERAMICS, AS WELL AS TOURISM ON A SMALL SCALE, L'AQUILA HAS LITTLE AT THE PRESENT TIME TO OFFER IN EMPLOYMENT. AGRICULTURE HAS CONTINUED TO DECLINE AND THERE HAS BEEN NO DIVERSIFICATION. LOCAL POLITICAL LEADERS WERE UNANIMOUS IN STATING THAT EMPHASIS SHOULD BE PLACED ON DEVELOPING GRAZING LAND AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY WHICH WOULD OFFER EMPLOYMENT, KEEP PEOPLE ON THE LAND AND ASSIST IN REDUCING ITALY'S DEPENDENCE ON THE IMPORTATION OF MEAT. THE OTHER THREE PROVINCES OF ABRUZZO, WHILE BETTER OFF ECONOMICALLY, ALSO NEED TO DIVERSIFY. THE CASSA DEL MEZZOGIORNO, ALTHOUGH RECOGNIZED AS HAVING PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAST IN CREATING THE NECESSARY INFRASTRUCTURE TO DEVELOP THE REGION (ROADS, SCHOOLS, SEWERS, ETC.), WAS AT THE SAME TIME CRITICIZED FOR NOT LOOKING FORWARD ENOUGH TO THE FUTURE. IT NOW NEEDS, ACCORDING TO A NUMBER OF OFFICIALS SEEN BY CONOFF, TO BE ORIENTED ON A MUCH MORE PROGRAMMATIC BASIS TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF PASTURE LAND, FORESTRY (ITALY IMPORTS WOOD\*), AGRICULTURAL CO-OPS TO CONSOLIDATE THE THOUSANDS OF 1-2 HECTARE PLOTS AND TOURISM (BOTH ON THE ADRIATIC AND IN THE MOUNTAINS). WHILE A NUMBER OF ABRUZZO'S MUNICIPALITIES ARE STILL IN THE BLACK (PESCARA, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS BEEN ENJOYING A TREMENDOUS EXPANSION DUE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITS BEACHES), OTHERS ARE BARELY HOLDING THEIR OWN OR IN ECONOMIC CRISIS. THE CITY OF L'AQUILA IS BANKRUPT PRINCIPALLY BECAUSE OF "MUNICIPALIZATION" OF CITY SERVICES WHICH ARE RUN BY SEMI-GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES AND WHICH HAVE ACCEDED TO OUTRAGEOUS LABOR CONTRACTS. THE STARTING SALARY OF A STREET CLEANER IN L'AQUILA IS 350,00 LIRE PER MONTH WITH NOT ONLY A 13TH BUT A 14TH MONTH ADDED ON\* BOTH THE CITIES OF L'AQUILA AND TERAMO HAVE UNIVERSITIES WHICH THEY CAN NO LONGER FINANCIALLY SUPPORT, AND THE MAYORS OF THE

TWO CITIES ARE LOOKING TO THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN THE  
HOPE THAT THEIR UNIVERSITIES WITH 5,000 STUDENTS EACH  
WILL BE INCORPORATED INTO THE STATE RUN UNIVERSITY  
SYSTEM. THIS WOULD NOT ONLY ALLEVIATE A HEAVY  
FINANCIAL BURDEN FOR THE CITIES BUT WOULD ALSO ASSIST IN  
ALLEVIATING THE OVERCROWDING OF OTHER STATE UNIVERSITIES.

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3. THE ABRUZZO REGIONAL GOVERNMENT IS A CENTER-LEFT  
COALITION WHOSE 40 MEMBERS ARE BROKEN DOWN AS FOLLOWS:  
18DC - 4PSI - 2PSDI - 1PRI - 13PCI - 2MSI-DN. THE  
PRESIDENT OF THE REGIONAL GIUNTA IS DC, AND THE  
PRESIDNET OF THE REGIONAL COUNCIL IS PCI. OF THE 4  
PROVINCES, PESCARA AND TERAMO HAVE FRONTIST  
ADMINISTRATIONS WITH PSDI-DISSIDNET PRESIDENTS AND PSI  
VICE-PRESIDENTS, WHILE L'AQUILA AND CHIETI ARE CENTER-  
LEFT AND HAVE DC PRESIDNETS. ON THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL,  
THREE OF THE PROVINCIAL CAPITALS HAVE DC MAYORS  
(CHIETI AND TERAMO HAVE DC MAJORITIES, PESCARA HAS A  
CENTER-LEFT ADMINISTRATION), WHILE ONE, L'AQUILA, HAS A  
SOCIAL DEMOCRAT AS MAYOR.

4. AS DURING TRIPS TO UMBRIA AND MARCHE RETIONS, CONOFF  
FOUND GENERAL CONSENSUS THAT IT IS TOO EARLY TO JUDGE  
EFFICACY OF THE "NEW" REGIONS. THE CONCEPT OF REGIONS,  
ON PAPER AT LEAST, IS AGREED TO BE A GOOD ONE. HOWEVER,  
AS PRESIDENT OF THE REGIONAL GIUNTA, DR. ROMEO RICCIUTI,  
ADMITTED, THE REGIONS HAVE STARTED TOO FAST BY

ADMINISTERING AS WELL AS LEGISLATING. RICCIUTI (DC)  
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BELIEVES THAT EVEN UNDER LAW 382 THE REGIONS HAVE BEEN GIVEN TOO MUCH AUTHORITY AND THAT THERE HAS NOT BEEN ENOUGH LONG RANGE PLANNING. HE STATED THAT THE REGIONS MUST ACT ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE RATHER THAN FORCING THE PEOPLE TO COME TO THE GOVERNMENT FOR SERVICES. OTHERWISE, JUST ANOTHER LEVEL OF BUREAUCRACY WILL HAVE BEEN CREATED.

5. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT DURING CALLS ON FRONTIST PROVINCIAL GIUNTAS IN TERAMO AND PESCARA IT WAS PSI VICE PRESIDENT IN BOTH CASES WHO DID MOST OF THE TALKING WHILE PSDI-DISSIDENT PRESIDENTS MERELY NODDED ASSENT OR ADDED A FEW CONFIRMING WORDS. PSI VICE PRESIDENT IN PESCARA WAS PARTICULARLY VOLUBLE IN DESCRIBING CONCEPT OF "ALTERNATIVA DI SINISTRA" AND HOW IT IS WORKING SUCCESSFULLY ON PROVINCIAL LEVEL. HE CLAIMED THAT THE PSI AND PSDI HAVE BEEN ABLE TO HOLD OFF AND CONTROL PCI. RELATING THE PESCARA PROVINCIAL EXPERIENCE TO THE NATIONAL LEVEL, THE VICE PRESIDNET STATED THAT PRESENT PSI POLICY CALLED FOR A GOVERNMENT OF THE SO-CALLED CONSTITUTIONAL ARC UNTIL THE PSI AND THE LAY DEMOCRATIC PARTIES (ALONG WITH ANY WILLING MEMBERS OF THE DC) WOULD BE STRONG ENOUGH TO CONTROL THE PCI IN AN "ALTERNATIVA DI SINISTRA." HE IS AGAINST THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE FOR 2 REASONS: 1) THE PCI CANNOT BE TRUSTED ONCE IN POWER AND 2) A PCI-DC GOVERNMENT WOULD NO LONGER BE FULLY DEMOCRATIC.

6. THROUGHOUT TRIP IN ABRUZZO CONOFF HEARD EVERYONE RECALL VISIT OF FORMER AMBASSADOR VOLPE TO THE REGION THREE YEARS AGO, AND OFFICIALS EXPRESSED PLEASURE AT VISIT OF CONOFF COMBINED WITH HOPE THAT EMBASSY CONTACTS WITH THE AREA WOULD BE MORE FREQUENT. PREFECT OF  
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PESCARA NOTED THAT USG WAS ONLY EMBASSY THAT HAD SENT AN OFFICIAL ON A CALL OF A STRICTLY COURTESY NATURE. CONOFF RECEIVED REQUESTS FOR GREATER CULTURAL COOPERATION AND TIES BETWEEN US AND THE REGION, PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO INCREASING THE NUMBER OF TWIN-CITIES AND STUDENT EXCHANGES. LOCAL OFFICIALS RECOGNIZED DIFFICULTIES OF FUNDING AND LIMITED ROLE USG COULD PLAY BECAUSE MANY CULTURAL INITIATIVES ARE

PRIVATE OR STATE AND LOCAL (AS OPPOSED TO FEDERAL)  
IN NATURE. HOWEVER, THEY WONDERED WHETHER EMBASSY  
MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO PLAY MORE OF A COORDINATING ROLE.  
PRESS COVERAGE OF CONOFF'S VISIT WAS EXTENSIVE WITH AT  
LEAST ONE STORY AND ACCOMPANYING PHOTO IN EACH OF THE  
REGIONAL EDITIONS OF "IL TEMPO" AND "IL MESSAGGERO." HOLMES

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## Message Attributes

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